

A

REVIEW

OF THE

STATE

OF THE

BRITISH NATION.

Saturday, October 6. 1711.

IN My last, I gave you a Letter from a Person I know very well, and his Design, concerning our Behaviour to the present Ministry ; I repeat the Letter, thus.

S I R,

I Am one of those they call Whigs, and consequently begin to grow something out of Fashion with my Neighbours, tho' that is no uneasiness to me ; but my chief difficulty is, to know how, as a true Englishman, and as one that is touch'd, I hope, with a Principle of Love to my Native Country, Zeal for its Liberties, and for the Settlement of the

Protestant Succession, I ought to behave myself, as to the late Changes in the Ministry, and as to the present publick Management of Affairs ? I am no Turn-Coat, nor am I weary or ashamed of my Principles, yet I cannot go that length as I see some go, as well in their Disapproving, and Opposing, as well as others in their Applauding and Justifying, either the Change, the Necessity of it, or the Proceedings in publick Affairs after it : I wish you would give some Hints with Plainness and Impartiality, how an honest Man ought to behave himself, with Respect to the New Ministry.

Your Humble Servant, F. R.
I shall

I Shall make no Reflections here, upon the Design of the Writer of this Letter; as to myself, I am very free to have my Behaviour Censur'd, by the Conclusion of my Life; and I hope it shall be all of a piece, steady, guided by Things and not by Persons; aim'd at the public Good, and entirely free from Partiality and Corruption; as for those that will not wait for the Issue of Things, but pass their unjust Censure on me before-hand, I am content to wait for their good Word, till they are convinc'd they have judg'd the Matter before they heard it, which I am sure will at last appear.

The Question now is, How must an honest Man behave to the New Ministry, &c.?

My Answer is brief and plain, and you may take it as an Account given you of myself, or as my Advice to another, which You please—— When Revolutions happen at Court, as I have seen many; when this Party or that Party goes in or goes out; when our Government change Hands in the Administration, it always lays the Subject under some Difficulties—— As to his Behaviour; but one general Rule serves me in all these Turns—— The Constitution is my Guide; so far as the Ministry goes along with the Constitution, every Subject that regards the general Good, acquiesces, and is quiet—— The Reason is clear, we do not go along with the Ministry, but they go along with us.

There is a manifest difference between a Revolution in the Government, and a Revolution in the Administration; the first is a Change of the Constitution itself, and settling it upon New, or restoring it to its Old Foundation; the latter is only a Change of Persons; in a Change of the Constitution I must be actively for, or against, and claim an active Concern, as a Member of the Constitution: But in the latter, I am passive, because it is the Act and Deed of the Sovereign, to whom I am a Subject, and do, by Law, submit.

In the Sovereign's appointing this or that Person to Manage or Administer her Affairs; and in her, often, how often as she pleases, Changeing or Shifting Hands in the said Administration; in this I say, I have nothing to do; it does not follow, that because I am not of the Opinion, that I must be passive in all Cases, that therefore I must be passive in nothing; an English Subject, tho' not blindly given up to absolute Subjection to Arbitrary Power, when invading the Laws, yet knows how to obey where it is his Duty; I may be sorry when I see Men put out, and Men put in, as I think these are, or these are not likely to make us happy and easie in their Administration: But I have no more to do, to Challenge the Sovereign for making this Man a Minister of State, or putting that Man out, than the Queen has to do, to call a Subject to Account for turning away a Footman; Secretaries of State, Comptrolers, Stewards of the Household, &c. are her Majesty's Menial Servants; Her Clerks, Letter-Writers, Errand-Bearers, &c. to do her Business; the Administration is the Queen's, and her Majesty may, without doubt, Employ whom she pleases, I have nothing to do with that.

As to their manner of Administration, while they keep within the Circle of the Laws, I have nothing to do with that neither: While they do Right, as above, they go along with me, I cannot be said to go along with them; if they go wrong, they go away from me, and I go wrong too, if I follow them—— He that serves a Minister of State, or joins with him in any illegal Step, especially knowing it to be so, is a Mercenary, a Flatterer, and ought to be the Contempt of Mankind, and may all such be condemn'd; but while the Ministry go on within the Circle of the Law, preserve the Constitution, uphold the Liberties and Interests of the Nation, let their Persons be who or what they will, without Enquiring their Names, or tho' I were never so much Alarm'd or Uneasie at their coming in, it is my Duty to join with them.

He that will not concur in the Government and Administration of his Country, tho' Legally Administer'd, merely because he does not like the Persons, or because he likes others better, is equally Guilty of Betraying the Peace of his Country, as he that fawns, flatters, and follows the Persons of the Ministry, without Enquiring into their Administration.

If the Ministry act counter to the National Constitution; if they Trample upon the Laws, if they Invade the Rights of the Subject, and Act upon Tyrannical Principles; if they break in upon the *Pacta Conventa* of the Revolution, I am at open Defiance with them, tho' they were the Old Ones; if they preserve our Property, keep Sacred our Constitution, recognize the Sovereignty of the Laws, and pursue the general Good, by right and legal Methods, God forbid I should not so far join with them, tho' they are New Ones, or were to be New Ones every Day.

The Case is not, Who are in the Administration? But how do they Administer?

— I think therefore the Distinction now taken up, is very Invidious, Partial, and Unjust; Such a Man is for the Old Ministry, and such a one is a Friend to the New Ministry; the true Enquiry is, and ought to be, after the Justice and Principle of their Administration, not the Person that Administers; let her Majesty change her Ministry as often as to her Wisdom seems good, I have no right to object against that, and as often, however often this is done, if the New Officers do their Duty, act Faithfully, Vigilantly, and uprightly, that is, Legally, I am with, and for them, let them be who it will, without a necessity so much as to know their Names; if they act Illegally, Arbitrarily, Unjustly, against Law, Right, Property, and the Constitution, I am against them, I am in their Teeth, without any regard to Persons and Sir-Names.

This, I think, is the true State of the Case, and this the Rule, the Golden Mean, by which I regulate myself; if I give Offence to some hot Friend, whose Aversion to Persons, or whose Opinion of Persons

runs in other Extremes, I am sorry for them; they who are thus guided by the Persons and Names of Men, rather than by the true Merit and Value of Things, are certainly wrong: He that acts as above, acts by Principle, I think I do so, if I know any Thing of myself; he that tells me of Bribery, and Writing to please, is, *first*, A Knave, in charging me with what he cannot prove; and, *secondly*, A Fool, in putting more Value upon the Review, and its Author also, than he pretends to, and suggesting, that his Pen is of such Consequence to the present Ministry, as to make it worth their while.

When the Administration of Affairs has run wrong, as above, I have never spar'd myself, I have appear'd against, and dar'd to speak Truth against it, in the Face, and in Contempt of the Power of Arbitrary Ministers of State, nay, in opposition to Parliaments themselves, when I have thought they Invaded the Liberties of their Country, which they were Constituted to protect; and if I see the same Cause, I dare do the same Thing again, and shall not fail to do it, let what Power or Persons soever, stand in my Way.—

But till the Ministry break in upon the Constitution; till they Invade Liberty, Encroach upon Property, break the Laws, and oppress the Subject, I cannot think it is the Duty or Interest of any Wise Man, to carry on his Regret at any Change the Queen pleases to make, to such a degree, as to fall upon the Persons that succeed, only because they are in Place, whether they act amiss, or no; they that think otherwise, may act as they please: Tell me of any Law broken, any part of the Constitution wounded, any of the Subjects Liberties Invaded, and I am as apt to cry out as any Body, and as apt now as ever— But it was never my Talent to Complain without Ground, that would be to obtain the Favour of not being regarded when I had cause.

A D V E R.

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Pater-Noster-Row. 1711.